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ABSTRACT

This document presents a series of 6 articles that present the case for women's studies in today's colleges and universities. Our society has traditionally discriminated against women, not only in jobs and education, but also by defining the female role as a submissive one, where the woman's highest goal is to further the occupational success of her spouse. The purpose of women's studies is to redefine the female role in terms of the possibility of women attaining success and fulfillment through professional occupations rather than through homemaking and child-rearing. Courses in women's studies attempt to raise the awareness of the achievements of women through the normal educational process. During the 1971-72 academic year there were approximately 750 women's courses on 500 campuses, covering topics from the history and literature of women to sex, sexism, and sex roles. It is hoped by the leaders of the movement that women's studies will become even more widespread and will penetrate the consciousness of all persons in every phase of our society. (HS)

NEWEST
COURSE ON CAMPUS

WOMEN'S STUDIES

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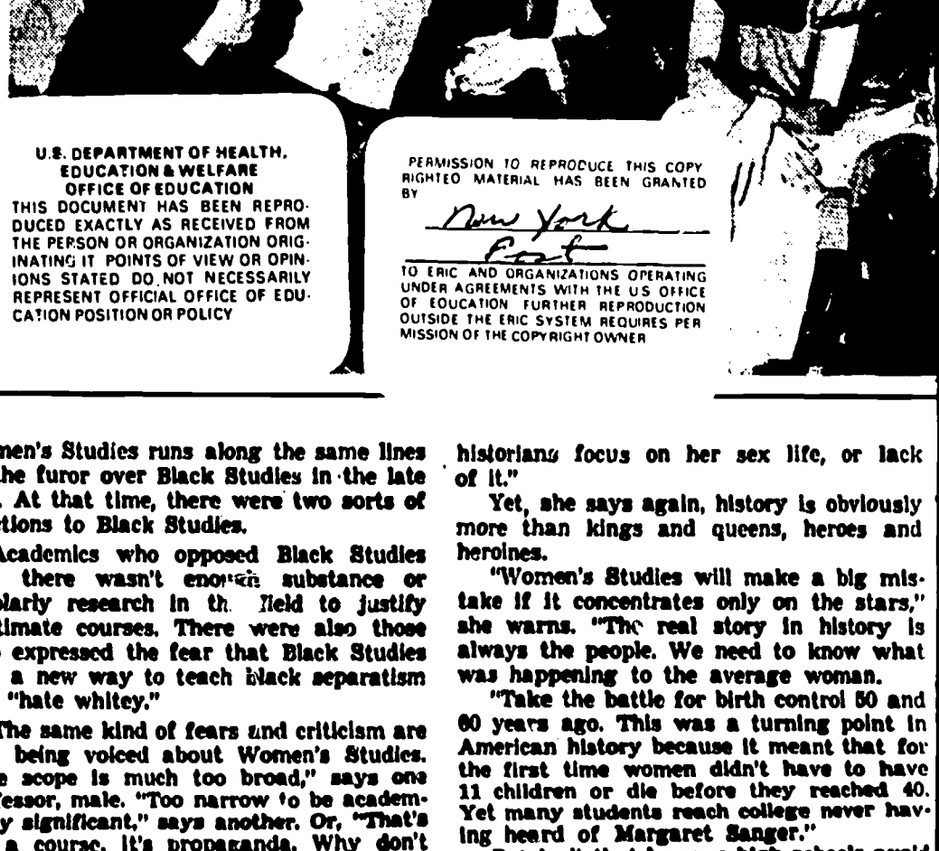

ARTICLE I: Frill or Necessity?

By LINDSAY MILLER

"The whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honored by them, to educate them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them—these are the duties of women at all times and what should be taught them from their infancy."

—Jean Jacques Rousseau, 18th Century French philosopher.

WELL, QUITE a few people these days would disagree with Jean Jacques about what the "*whole* education of women ought to be." And with Rousseau's hidden assumption that women and their place in human history are not really worthy of serious study.

For now we have Women's Studies—a new phenomenon which has sprung up on college campuses across the country in the wake of the Women's Liberation Movement. This last school year there were 750 women's courses on 500 campuses, covering topics from the history and literature of women to sex, sexism and sex-roles.

Five years ago, only a handful of courses focused on women in particular. Today such courses are found all over, from Ivy League schools to community colleges. In the New York area, at least 27 colleges offer courses in women, and at Richmond College of the City University of New York, you can even

Women's Studies runs along the same lines as the furor over Black Studies in the late '60s. At that time, there were two sorts of reactions to Black Studies.

Academics who opposed Black Studies said there wasn't enough substance or scholarly research in the field to justify legitimate courses. There were also those who expressed the fear that Black Studies was a new way to teach black separatism and "hate whitey."

The same kind of fears and criticism are now being voiced about Women's Studies. "The scope is much too broad," says one professor, male. "Too narrow to be academically significant," says another. Or, "That's not a course, it's propaganda. Why don't they go on and call it Bra-Burning 101—or Castration 310?"

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What are these courses about anyway? Who takes Women's Studies? Are they really legitimate courses? Is Women's Studies here to stay— or is it simply the latest intellectual fad? Answers may be found in an extensive survey by this reporter of Women's Studies courses in the New York area.

Here's a mini-catalog of some of the most popular types of courses and the kinds of questions they ask:

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"Take the battle for birth control 50 and 60 years ago. This was a turning point in American history because it meant that for the first time women didn't have to have 11 children or die before they reached 40. Yet many students reach college never having heard of Margaret Sanger."

But isn't that because high schools avoid talking about sex, not about women? "That's just the point," she replies. "Sex may seem a sticky subject to male textbook writers and school administrators, one they'd rather avoid. But birth control is a subject women can't afford to avoid. The controversy over birth control, like the current battle over abortion, is also very instructive about the society as a whole."

"Imagine what it's like for a young woman to go through school hearing only about men," says Gerda Lerner, a prominent women's historian and a professor at Sarah Lawrence College. "If everything about women in general is so insignificant, then she must be insignificant as well."

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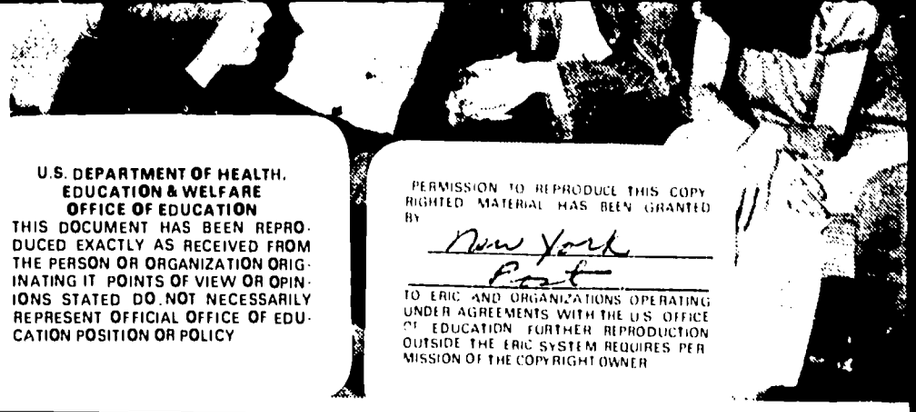

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The argument for Women's Studies is basically the same as that for Black Studies —that a large chunk of human history and experience (exactly half in this case) has been neglected or misrepresented.

"But women don't need their own courses," a male professor at Hunter says. "Blacks maybe—but women? Any course about men is certainly about women too. And besides, what have women ever done anyway?"

"Plenty," is the angry response of Sarah Pomeroy, who has spent the last seven months working to establish a women's studies program at Hunter. "Women have been living on this earth just as long as men. They've done plenty, and plenty has been done to them. If traditional courses had done their job, there'd never be this knowledge gap."

Women's Studies is also caught in an Enthusiasm Gap. Those who are involved couldn't be more excited. The general public, as yet, isn't even aware of this newest academic revolution. For various reasons, this corner of the women's movement has not had the publicity given to other more colorful women's actions.

But once the word gets out that "They're teaching that Lib stuff in college now," the sparks are bound to fly. In fact, the sparks are already flying on college campuses.

Not surprisingly, the controversy about Women's Studies runs along the same lines as the furor over Black Studies in the late '60s. At that time, there were two sorts of reactions to Black Studies.

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HISTORY, OR "THE AMAZING INVISIBLE WOMAN"—On the first day of class, the teacher walks in and says, "All right, class, I want you to name 10 important American women who are (a) dead, (b) not President's wives, and (c) not Betsy Ross." Very few first-day students can.

"History as we all learned it was mainly about men—kings and presidents, wars and politics," says Anne Grant West, chairman of the National Organization for Women's education committee. She is currently using a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts to produce a multi-media program for high school students called "Our North American Foremothers."

She names a few: "Anne Hutchinson, who founded Rhode Island; Harriet Beecher Stowe, who turned the tide against slavery with "Uncle Tom's Cabin;" Anna Ella Carroll . . ."

Anna Ella Carroll—who's she? "She's a good example of how women get shunted aside," says Anne Grant West. "She managed to get access to Lincoln's Cabinet and helped plan some of the most important campaigns in the Civil War. But did she get credit? No— it would have demoralized the troops too much to know a woman was calling the shots."

But all these women were really exceptions to the rule, she is quick to point out. "The majority of women have never had access to what male historians consider the stuff of history. Even when you have a queen like Cleopatra or Elizabeth I, the historians focus on her sex life, or la of it."

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Post Daily Magazine

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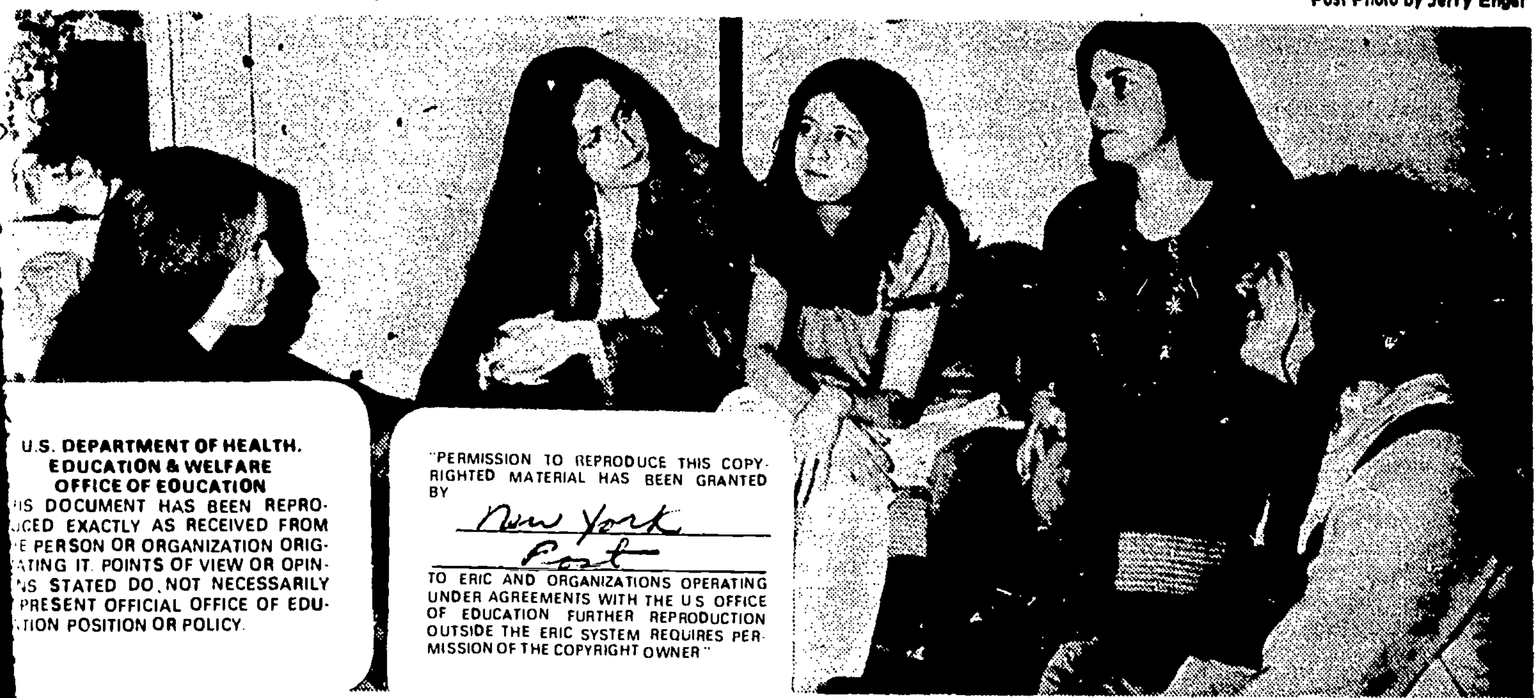
Post Photo by Jerry Engel



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Still, many teachers report, once women discover these books they devour them. Cur- rent favorites, besides Plath, include Doris Lessing's "The Golden Notebook," Anais Nin's "Diaries," Simone de Beauvoir's "The Second Sex," and a nearly forgotten work called "The Awakening" by a 19th Century American novelist, Kate Chopin.

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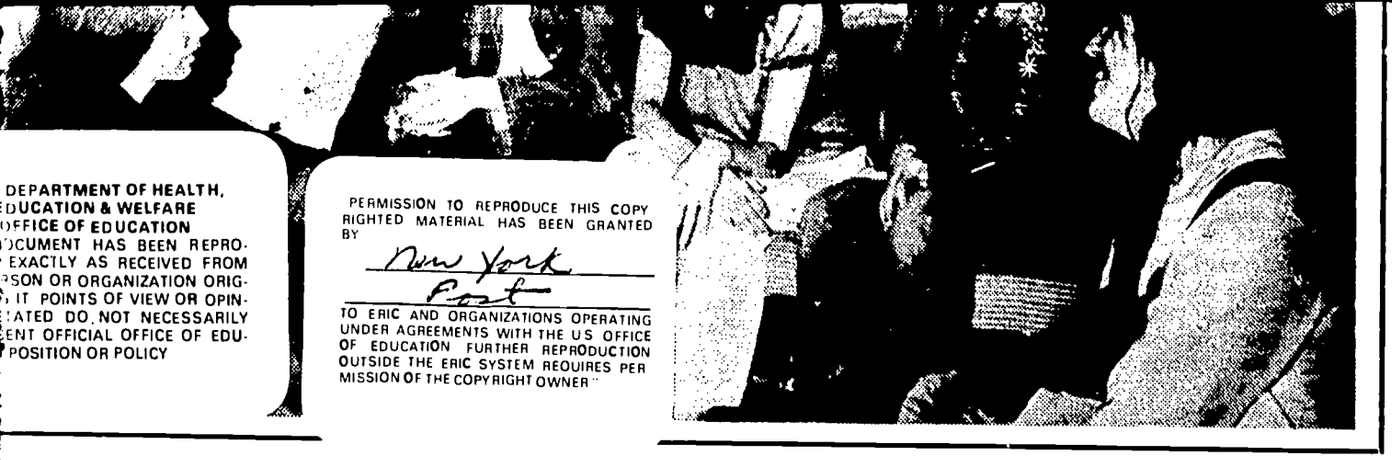

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BIOLOGY—What are the actual biological differences between men and women? Is the "raging hormonal influence" any stronger in women than in men?

PSYCHOLOGY—What are the alternatives to Freud's view of women as passive, dependent creatures motivated by penis envy? How are men and women conditioned differently as children? Do psychologists have one standard of healthy behavior for men and another for women?

SOCIOLOGY—The nuclear family has become the norm only in recent history. What are the consequences of such social arrangements?

RELIGION. Why is God always "He" in Judeo-Christian tradition? What about the Creation story, with Eve, the temptress, fashioned from Adam's Rib? How are women viewed in Eastern religions? At NYU a group of women religion majors who thought questions like these weren't being answered in class formed their own study group called "Women of the Spirit and the Flesh."

Obviously, Women's Studies is not sticking to Rousseau's narrow definition of what "the whole education of women ought to be." For the feminist, Socrates had perhaps a better motto: "Know thyself."

Continued Tomorrow.

5

WOMEN'S STUDIES NEWEST COURSE ON CAMPUS

The Feminist Movement course at Queens College taught by Wendy Martin (standing), an assistant professor of American Literature. In the background is Mark Davis, who registered 'to get a little liberation for myself.'

Post Photo by Vic DeLucia

By LINDSAY MILLER

ARTICLE II: The Students.

WHO STUDIES Women's Studies?

A male engineering student from Columbia crossed over to take "Male and Female: A Sociological Perspective" at Barnard this semester because he said "it sounded like a nice, easy springtime course."

A nun who teaches fifth grade in Brooklyn took "Women and Schools" at Richmond College because "I needed one more education credit and this course met at the right time."

And, undoubtedly, in some Women's Studies class in the city this year there sat an unreconstructed male chauvinist who signed up for the course "to study a few females myself—ho, ho."

Barbara A. White, who teaches a course led "The Woman Myth" at Northwestern iversity, tells about her experience with s last type of student: "I was surprised to find one of my second term sections combined," says Florence Howe, who teaches several non-Women's Studies courses in addition to this one. "At a time when most teachers are complaining about apathy and non-attendance, we've had a large exciting class every time," agrees co-teacher Anne Driver.

The variety of students in this class is unusual. Old Westbury, which is a new experimental division of the State University, makes it official policy to admit a large percentage of older and minority-group students. Two of the 16 women in this course, a nurse and a preschool teacher, are black.

The majority of students in Women's Studies are young, white women. But there are also some white men and a sprinkling of black and Hispanic students, both men and women, in many classes.

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There's also a growing interest in Women's Studies among older women. Betty Gordon, for instance, took a course on "The Feminist Movement" at Queens College this women in the course on "The Feminist Movement" at Queens College. What's he doing there?

"I kept getting Women's Lib by osmosis, through the media and everything. Some of it sounded pretty good, especially the idea that men and women don't always have to play roles. I was fed up with roles and rules about what a man should be. I guess I wanted a little liberation for myself."

Has the course made a difference? "It really has. I'm a lot happier and more relaxed. I don't feel like a failure if I'm not out having sex every minute. I'm free to be me.

"Of course," he adds, "a lot of guys think I'm crazy. Women's Lib frightens them, so they get uptight whenever I talk about this class. Girls are a problem too, since most of the ones around here are definitely not feminists.

"But the women in this course," says Davis (making the unconscious switch from "girls" to "women"), "have been great, really supportive. We're going through thes

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Barbara A. White, who teaches a course called "The Woman Myth" at Northwestern University, tells about her experience with this last type of student: "I was surprised to find one of my second term sections two-thirds male. For the first two weeks, their communication was mostly non-verbal —consisting of snicker twice, roll your eyes and elbow your buddy in the ribs.

"Why were they in the class, it seemed time to ask. A very guilty-looking young man finally volunteered the answer. He and nine or 10 friends in the same dorm had decided to take the course as a joke. 'A joke?' I said, a little slow on the uptake. 'Well, I mean, a course on *women* . . .'"

Barbara White admits that "this story, like many of our stories about women, is extreme but true." Obviously, people take college courses for their own particular, personal reasons.

Yet, from interviews with a large number of Women's Studies students, it seems that for every one who regards this kind of course as a convenience or a joke, there are a dozen others who take it quite seriously.

Take the students studying "The History of Women's Education in the U. S." at the State University at Old Westbury. They include a housewife with eight children, a young married woman who works as a computer programmer, a high school teacher and several full-time undergraduates.

"There's more good hard work coming out of this one class than all my other classes combined," says Florence Howe, who teaches several non-Women's Studies courses in addition to this one. "At a time when most teachers are complaining about apathy and non-attendance, we've had a large exciting class every time," agrees co-teacher Anne Driver.

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Students are attracted to Women's Studies for a variety of reasons. Many are Women's Lib activists, some are intellectually curious and others are just plain curious.

"It's this last group that really interests me," said Wendy Martin, a teacher at Queens College. "Many of the students in my course on 'The Feminist Movement' come from conservative, middle-class backgrounds, and most of them still live at home.

"Two years ago, they wouldn't have set foot in this course. Yet here they are." How come? "Students today just can't escape dealing with the women's movement. They hear about it in the media—and they're intrigued or annoyed or confused. But why don't you come out next Wednesday and see the students for yourself?"

The class at Queens turned out to be a kaleidoscopic view of this particular kind of Women's Studies. For the most part, the students were not highly politicized like those at Richmond College, nor were they rigorously intellectual like those at Barnard (both to be described in tomorrow's article). These were just student-students—some naive, some more sophisticated—groping around, trying to understand the issues.

Mark Davis is one of five men among 55 women in the course on "The Femi Movement" at Queens College. What's doing there?

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a coed school? Isn't that sex discrimination in reverse? "I know it is," said one teacher, "But I believe strongly that if women can't talk, they can't learn. Some men signed up for this course but—let's just say the registrar couldn't work it into their schedules."

Eliminating men didn't prove so easy in a course on "Women's Revolution" at CCNY's experimental School of Humanistic Studies. "On the first day of class," recalled Ann Petrie, one of the co-teachers of the course, "a group of activist women announced this should be a women-only class.

"Later the rumor spread that the women bodily evicted the men from the class, but that really isn't what happened," she said. "The women made some very cogent arguments, it wasn't hysterical or angry. The class that day lasted five hours, and by the end two of the four men had accepted the women's arguments. They agreed to leave, but two other men wanted to stay.

"The whole episode became a *cause celebre* on campus," she continued. "It went all the way to the president's office and the word came down, include those men—or else. So, we worked out a compromise. It was a twice-a-week class, and one day the men and women met together, the other separately."

Steve Matthews is one of the men who refused to leave the class. "But I was happy with the compromise," he said last week on the last day of class. "While the women were meeting separately, I went to a men's consciousness-raising group.

"It was a new experience working closely with men in this kind of group," he said. "We met in people's houses and usually cooked a meal. We ranged in age from 42 to 20, so there were different perspectives when we talked about things like the relationship between fathers and sons.

"I guess the same things happened with us that happen with women's consciousness-raising groups," he continued. "We started talking and we found we shared a lot of the same feelings and fears—about women, marriage, friendships with men. The best thing was that we evolved into a real group. School is over, but we've decided to keep on meeting."

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Just as some blacks argued for Black Studies which exclude whites, some women are saying they can't accomplish their consciousness-raising with men around. "I'm glad there were no men in this class," said one of the younger students in the Old Westbury class. "We'd have spent all our time explaining and arguing."

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But aren't single-sex courses illegal in a coed school? Isn't that sex discrimination in reverse? "I know it is," said one teacher, "But I believe strongly that if women can't talk, they can't learn. Some men signed up for this course but—let's just say the registrar couldn't work it into their schedules."

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Sheila Tobias, who heads the Women's Studies program at formerly all-male Wesleyan University, believes men and women are an "appropriate mix" for an introductory lecture course on women. (What doesn't mix, she says in an aside, are radical and non-radical women. "They just infuriate each other.")

Men and women, though, can benefit from being in class together, she insists. Yet, she adds, "I never cease to be astounded at how readily male students will talk in class and how long it takes women students to respond—the exception being the older women from the community who enjoy taking on adolescent males.

"One explanation," she suggests, "is that young women are taught to be passive in front of men their own age. But I think something else is at work in this class, too.

"A woman has an entirely different experience of this course than a man. Her questions are more subtle, her appreciations more complex. She digests a lecture slowly, referring to it or the reading weeks later. After all, this course is about *her*.

"We recently had a lecture on the poetry of Sylvia Plath, for example. Here she is, an overachieving, very talented Smith College graduate, and her poems trace her path toward suicide. The men found the lecture interesting. It made the women shudder."

TOMORROW: Street vs. Classroom.

Post Photo by Arthur Pomerantz

WOMEN'S STUDIES

Post D

NEWEST COURSE ON CAMPUS

By LINDSAY MILLER

At right, a "dialogue" at Richmond College. Students at left are researching the Overbury collection on women at Barnard.

ARTICLE III: Street vs. Classroom.

THE WOMEN students at Barnard and Richmond College look basically alike —long hair and jeans. But in terms of their Women's Studies programs, the two schools couldn't be farther apart.

To use current feminist jargon, it's the distinction between "street" and "classroom" Women's Studies. In "street" studies, as practiced at Richmond, the emphasis is on consciousness-raising, and the goal is to politicize, to radicalize women. "Street" Women's Studies may still meet in classrooms, but the focus is outside, in-the-street.

"Classroom" Women's Studies, on the other hand, is much more traditional. That's not to say students at Barnard aren't political or active in the women's movement. Many of them are. It's just that in class they're more likely to find the traditional tools of the academic trade—research, analysis, lectures, papers and grades.

Obviously, this distinction is too arbitrary to be completely accurate. But the two programs are different, and the ways in which they are different say something about what's happening in the Women's Studies movement as a whole.

Richmond College is a small division (3,000 students) of the City University of New York, located in a converted office building just overlooking the Staten Island entrance to the ferry. It's also the first college in the city to offer a major in Women's Studies.

"Richmond is really a special, unusual place," said one of the group of women students who had gathered in the cafeteria to discuss the women's program. They were happy to talk, but with two provisos:

No names. ("That would be ego-tripping. We're much more of a collective.") And no physical descriptions. ("There was a reporter in here from the local paper who couldn't get over the way we looked—nice and nor-

hour course on "Sexuality" for secretaries in the building.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of the Richmond College women's program is the way it's run. Once a week, a group of majors, teachers and other "actively involved" people gather in a small office for a course called "Dialogue on Development and Governance of Women's Studies."

Actually, it's an open debate on how to run the program. Together this group tries to decide what's working and what is not, which courses to offer and whom to hire and fire.

Such collectivism is a far cry from the traditional college hierarchy where department chairmen make the decisions, students have little to say and the in-fighting goes on behind the scenes.

At Richmond, the in-fighting has been out in the open. This year the program has been torn apart by a deep internal conflict involving, among other things, a small group of lesbian students and faculty.

The students in the cafeteria did not identify with the lesbian group and were less eager to talk about this. But, they said, the conflict gets down to goals and methods. The debate at Richmond, in fact, reflects a major conflict in the women's movement as a whole:

Should feminists concentrate all their energies on the women's movement? Or can they fight against the war and racism at the same time? Must women unite and fight together *as women*—or can they work together with men in a common struggle?

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"The majority don't want to ghettoize Women's Studies," said one of the students. "If the program gets the reputation of being only for political radicals, or only for lesbians, or even only for women, we're going to turn people off. Our job right now is to turn people on to feminism."

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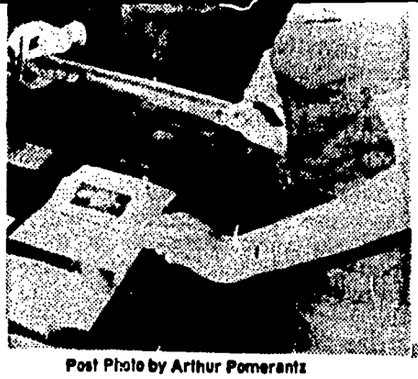

Post Photo by Arthur Pomerantz

ON CAMPUS

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No names. ("That would be ego-tripping. We're much more of a collective.") And no physical descriptions. ("There was a reporter in here from the local paper who couldn't get over the way we looked—nice and normal.")

Anyway, this student explained, "Richmond is a special place because the administration, students and teachers actually listen to each other. Change and innovation don't come easily, but things *can* happen here."

The first thing to happen in Women's Studies was a course called "Women and Society," offered in the spring of 1970. Richmond already had an active women's group —including both students and teachers— which had been meeting regularly for consciousness-raising sessions. "We wanted a course specifically about women, and together we designed this one."

The enrolment was high, and so was the demand for more courses. By spring of the next year, the school had established a Women's Studies program, with a major in the Social Sciences division.

This semester the program had grown to 15 courses for 250 students, including 15 majors. There was also a non-credit lunch-hour course on "Sexuality" for secretaries in the building.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of the Richmond College women's program is the way it's run. Once a week, a group of majors, teachers and other "actively involved" people gather in a small office for a course called "Dialogue on Development and Governance of Women's Studies."

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Next year's students will have a choice of 20 courses, ranging from introductory classes on "Sex Roles" and "Self Defense" to others on "Third World Women" and "Lesbian Consciousness."

The course on "Sociology of Women" will be open to women only, and "Sociology of Men" to men only. There will also be a coed class on "Human Sexuality" which, according to a course description, emphasizes "basic factual material on physiology and sexual response to dispel some of the many myths we have."

"It's interesting," noted one of the women students who took the sexuality course this year, "the women were fascinated by all the reading, but a lot of men seemed scared of it. Most of them obviously didn't read Masters and Johnson very well, because they kept asking the same questions over and over again."

Besides its unorthodox courses, Richmond also offers credit for "street" experiences. That means students can earn credit for working in a day care center, welfare rights organization or food co-op, any group agrees teaches the student women and society.

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Actually, Dr. Baxter corrected herself, the first course wasn't that hard to establish. "I had to choose a topic for an American history colloquium. Out of the blue, really, I chose women."

"That was in 1966," she explained, "when no one, faculty or students, had even heard of the Women's Liberation Movement. As a scholar, I had simply become aware of a great gap in our knowledge of American history."

How did her colleagues react to the course? "Some were intrigued," she said. "The idea of Women's Studies really opened their eyes. But by the time they began to propose their own courses, Women's Lib had entered the picture. All of a sudden, there was a lot of opposition."

"Interestingly," notes Catharine Stimpson, an assistant professor of English, "much of the resistance came from the bright young men on the faculty. They said women's courses were frivolous because there wasn't enough material. Perhaps they were threatened by the fact there is plenty of material. They'd just have to step out of their comfortable specialties to find out about it."

Partly as a reaction to such skepticism, partly out of Barnard's intellectual tradition, the 11 women's courses in their curriculum have a strongly academic tone.

Not all the students are pleased. "I'd hoped this course would be more political," said one Barnard student after a class called "Male and Female: A Sociological Perspective." Told of the student's criticism, Professor-Emeritus Mirra Komarovsky retorted, "But we must be scholarly, not rhetorical. The students think they know the answers, but they can be very naive."

how exciting it is, both on a personal and intellectual level.

"The academic atmosphere does not have to stifle all energetic discussion. Quite the contrary—the academic work is often the spark that releases the energy," says Catherine Stimpson. For example, she says, in her women's literature course this fall, "We were discussing Mrs. Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's 'To the Lighthouse,' and all of a sudden there was a violent argument over whether she was a fink.

"The radical students said she was for accepting the traditional woman's role. Another group of students defended her because they seemed to identify with her. And a third group, rather primly, said, 'I refuse to discuss Mrs. Ramsay in this way. This is a work of literature.'

"Look, I said. You've got to be aware of *how* you're thinking of Mrs. Ramsay as well as *what* you're thinking. If you take a personal approach, that's fine, or a political one, or a literary one—just as long as you know what you're doing."

She fears Women's Studies will get stuck in the same bind as this class—trying to communicate, but speaking on different levels, mixing preaching with teaching. "My students know who I am and what I stand for. But in class my job is to help them see, not compel behavior. I teach instead of preach."

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How does the fact that Barnard is a women's college affect the question of Women's Studies?

"It means we have a special obligation to women," said Martha Peterson, president of the college, speaking at her desk the other morning. She is very enthusiastic about the new Barnard Women's Center, established with a bequest from Helen Rogers Reid, Barnard '03 and mother of Westchester Rep. Ogden Reid.

The Women's Center will sponsor conferences, lectures and projects that "fuse the resources of the college with activities on behalf of women." In other words, says Miss

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y, it's an open debate on how to rogram. Together this group tries what's working and what is not, rses to offer and whom to hire

llectivism is a *far cry* from the college hierarchy where depart-men make the decisions, students to say and the in-fighting goes on scenes.

nond, the in-fighting has been out . This year the program has been by a deep internal conflict la-nong other things, a small group students and faculty.

dents in the cafeteria did not iden-the lesbian group and were less alk about this. But, they said, the cts down to goals and methods. e at Richmond, in fact, reflects a flict in the women's movement as

feminists concentrate all their en-the women's movement? Or can against the war and racism at ime? Must women unite and fight s women—or can they work to-h men in a common struggle?

★ ★ ★

najority don't want to ghettoize Studies," said one of the students. gram gets the reputation of being olitical radicals, or only for les-ven only for women, we're going ople off. Our job right now is to e on to feminism."

ear's students will have a choice rses, ranging from introductory "Sex Roles" and "Self Defense" on "Third World Women" and Consciousness."

rse on "Sociology of Women" will women only, and "Sociology of en only. There will also be a coed Human Sexuality" which, accord-urse description, emphasizes "basic terial on physiology and sexual re-dispel some of the many myths

cresting," noted one of the women ho took the sexuality course this women were fascinated by all the t a lot of men seemed scared of them obviously didn't read Mas-Johnson very well, because they g the same questions over and

its unorthodox courses, Richmond credit for "street" experiences. s students can earn credit for a day care center, welfare rights organization or food co-op, anything the group agrees teaches the student more about women and society.

When Annette Baxter, professor of history at Barnard, heard about the Women's Studies program at Richmond, her jaw literally dropped. "When I think," she said, "of the trouble we had pushing through just a few traditional courses . . ."

Actually, Dr. Baxter corrected herself, the first course wasn't that hard to establish. "I had to choose a topic for an American history colloquium. Out of the blue, really, I chose women."

"That was in 1966," she explained, "when no one, faculty or students, had even heard of the Women's Liberation Movement. As a scholar, I had simply become aware of a great gap in our knowledge of American history."

How did her colleagues react to the course? "Some were intrigued," she said. "The idea of Women's Studies really opened their eyes. But by the time they began to propose their own courses, Women's Lib had entered the picture. All of a sudden, there was a lot of opposition."

"Interestingly," notes Catharine Stimpson, an assistant professor of English, "much of the resistance came from the bright young men on the faculty. They said women's courses were frivolous because there wasn't enough material. Perhaps they were threatened by the fact there is plenty of material. They'd just have to step out of their comfortable specialties to find out about it."

Partly as a reaction to such skepticism, partly out of Barnard's intellectual tradition, the 11 women's courses in their curriculum have a strongly academic tone.

Not all the students are pleased. "I'd hoped this course would be more political," said one Barnard student after a class called "Male and Female: A Sociological Perspective." Told of the student's criticism, Professor-Emeritus Mirra Komarovsky retorted, "But we must be scholarly, not rhetorical. The students think they know the answers, but they can be very naive."

In class that day, she had returned a test and chided the students for their fuzzy thinking: "I asked for a critique of Freud's incest taboo. But most of you only told me what he left out. I wanted you to comment on what's wrong with the theory itself."

She spoke in a motherly, teacherly way: "Now 10 of you got C-plus or below on this test. Can you wait for the end of this class to find out — or will the anxiety be too great?" They couldn't wait.

As the class continued over a shuffle of papers, Prof. Komarovsky brought up "the very consistent cultural stereotype that women are prettier, more devious than men." She asked the class for comments, and a polite but not particularly lively discussion followed.

The class that day, however, may have been an exception. Both students and teachers in the Barnard women's program report how exciting it is, both on a personal and intellectual level.

"The academic atmosphere does not have to stifle all energetic discussion. Quite the contrary—the academic work is often the spark that releases the energy," says Catherine Stimpson. For example, she says, in her women's literature course this fall, "We were discussing Mrs. Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's 'To the Lighthouse,' and all of a sudden there was a violent argument over whether she was a fink.

"The radical students said she was for accepting the traditional woman's role. Another group of students defended her because they seemed to identify with her. And a third group, rather primly, said, 'I refuse to discuss Mrs. Ramsay in this way. This is a work of literature.'

"Look, I said. You've got to be aware of *how* you're thinking of Mrs. Ramsay as well as *what* you're thinking. If you take a personal approach, that's fine, or a political one, or a literary one—just as long as you know what you're doing."

She fears Women's Studies will get stuck in the same bind as this class—trying to communicate, but speaking on different levels, mixing preaching with teaching. "My students know who I am and what I stand for. But in class my job is to help them see, not compel behavior. I teach instead of preach."

★ ★ ★

How does the fact that Barnard is a women's college affect the question of Women's Studies?

"It means we have a special obligation to women," said Martha Peterson, president of the college, speaking at her desk the other morning. She is very enthusiastic about the new Barnard Women's Center, established with a bequest from Helen Rogers Reid, Barnard '03 and mother of Westchester Rep. Ogden Reid.

The Women's Center will sponsor conferences, lectures and projects that "fuse the resources of the college with activities on behalf of women." In other words, says Miss Stimpson, who is acting director of the center, "we're saying you can unite the 'street' and 'classroom' lives of women."

She disagrees strongly with "the radical feminists who say academic women sell out to the male education establishment. To me that's an oversimplified distinction between thinking and doing. Thinking is doing.

"The 'classroom' has its virtues," she points out, "and so does the 'street.' In the classroom you have seriousness, rigor, dedication and the sense there's a lot you don't know. On the street, there's liveliness, informality and the sense that intellectual activity can matter in your life.

"I've known plenty of women who've bridged the gap between activism and scholarship. Shouldn't Women's Studies be able to do the same?"

Continued Tomorrow

13

Post Photos by Vic DeLucia

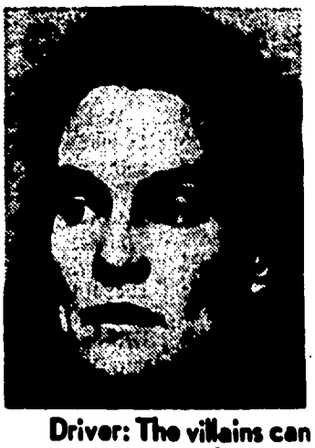
The Educated Woman in America class at Old Westbury discusses Sylvia Plath's 'The Bell Jar.'

Howe: An open-ended question.

WOMEN'S STUDIES

NEWEST COURSE ON CAMPUS

By LINDSAY MILLER



Driver: The villains can be seen.

ARTICLE IV: A Classroom Session.

TWO THINGS stood out at the final session of a Women's Studies class the other day—no one took notes, and everyone participated.

"This class is very different from what I remember in college," said Florence Howe, one of the co-teachers of "History of Women's Education in the U. S." at the State University of New York at Old Westbury, L. I.

"There were usually one or two students who dominated class discussion, while the rest sat bored. Or the teacher lectured and the students took notes." Yes, she remembered the apocryphal college story about the professor who walked in and said "Good Morning" and the class wrote it down.

"I can't lecture the students," said Ann Driver, the other teacher of the class. "I can share my expertise on history, and Florence can talk about literature. But we can't pronounce the truth. Women's Studies is so new and so vast, no one can claim to be an expert in the field.

"The students [all female in this case] are just as much experts on being women as we are. Maybe they don't take notes because there's no final exam. But I really think it never occurred to anyone because we're too busy talking and sharing."

"The great thing about Women's Studies," said one young woman in the class, "is first of an extremely sensitive and tormented young woman who tried to commit suicide—and of course author Plath later, at the age of 31, did commit suicide.

The open-ended question was a quote from a review by Elizabeth Hardwicke:

"'The Bell Jar' has an interestingly cold, unfriendly humor . . . The suffering is described more or less empirically 'like a photograph,' the teacher said, as if it were a natural thing, and the pity flows over you partly because she is so hard and glassy about her life."

"Are you sure she read the same book?," asked Sophie, an older woman who is sometimes the clown of the class. "I didn't think the heroine was cold or hard at all. I felt very sympathetic toward her."

"The second sentence about how everything was described empirically hit me," volunteered a young soft-spoken woman. "Plath has a way of describing everything in this sort of flat inevitable tone. I think this is part of the way she experiences a nervous breakdown.

"Like especially when she describes crawling on the floor to the window. The first time you read it you say, oh, she's crawling across to the window. And then you sort of realize, wait a second, that's not how most people get to windows. This was really a well-handled strategy to help the reader understand madness, because it sort of creeps

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"One baby, a miscarriage, an appendectomy, another baby. She broke up with her husband and was left with no friends, money problems and those babies, and she was trying to write. I began to see villains in the society as a whole."

The discussion proceeded, mixing literary analysis, psychological observations and personal experience in a natural, casual manner. Much of what the students said about Sylvia Plath could have applied if she had been a man. But they also looked at what was uniquely female in her experience.

At one point, the class focused on the question of the character's relationship to her mother and the woman-woman relationship in general. Both teachers made theoretical comments, but they also talked about their own experiences—one with her mother, the other with her daughter.

The two-hour class, which had started at 7 p.m., didn't end until 11. At the break, two students brought out bottles of white wine, and others produced cookies and cakes. "This class has been so good, we wanted to celebrate," they said.

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"The great thing about Women's Studies," said one young woman in the class, "is first, you're learning new stuff but, second, you're learning it in a new way. I never used to speak up in any classes, but here the mood is—well, different, and you're studying about yourself, really, so everybody feels like talking."

But this open atmosphere didn't spring up overnight, Florence Howe admitted over dinner. "At first the students were painfully shy and unsure of themselves. There are a few articulate women in the class, and they can intimidate the others."

To counteract this, she uses a technique which is popular in women's consciousness-raising groups. She asks an open-ended question and gets everyone in the class to answer. "Once a woman discovers the group is interested in what she personally has to say, she'll keep participating."

The topic last week was Sylvia Plath's "The Bell Jar," the autobiographical novel of an extremely sensitive and tormented young woman who tried to commit suicide—and of course author Plath later, at the age of 31, did commit suicide.

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Several women said they identified strongly with the Sylvia Plath-character in the book, others said they couldn't see why she had a breakdown. "She had everything going for her," said one of the younger women. "In the beginning, when she won that magazine scholarship, she seemed like a normal girl on a fling in New York."

"But maybe," said another, "normal girls are crazy. Or at least they live in a crazy world which tells them be bright and do well in one breath, and says be soft and passive and feminine in the next."

Teacher Ann Driver supplied some background information. "I was getting impatient with the character and her problems, until I thought about the real Sylvia Plath and what she went through in the last two years of her life, when she was writ this novel:

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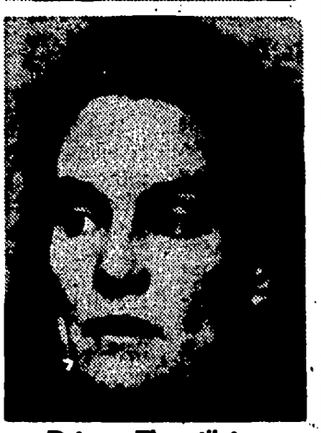

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But doesn't a college course need some academic grounding? Don't you need to read some books?

"We thought so — and carefully prepared a booklist," said Miss Petrie. "But the students revolted against being dictated to about what to read. Each week they'd have long discussions about what they wanted to read for the next time.

"Interestingly," she added, "the books the students chose followed almost exactly our original list. And that includes some pretty heavy reading." The CCNY list is typical of the academic demands students and teachers make in many women's courses.

They read, for instance, Engels' "The Origin of the Family and Private Property," Wilhelm Reich's "The Sexual Revolution," Simone de Beauvoir's "The Second Sex," Shulamith Firestone's "The Dialectic of Sex," along with the now standards in most women's curricula. Anais Nin's diaries, "Zelda," "The Bell Jar" and, for another point of view, "Lady Chatterley's Lover."

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Whatever the jumping-off point, though, Women's Studies classes almost inevitable get back to the personal. "Sometimes class discussions can be threatening for students," says Elaine Showalter, who teaches at Douglass College. "Intellectually, they see how sex-stereotypes can trap men and women in certain behavior patterns, but at the same time they might not be ready to give up these patterns in their own lives."

When classes include both men and women, or radical and non-radical students, she points out, students often find themselves involved in violent disagreements. "For women who've been taught to repress and avoid conflict all their lives, this can be an alarming experience—and liberating, too."

One way students work out their new thoughts and feelings is by keeping a journal. Many introductory courses, in fact, require such a journal instead of a term paper. "It's amazing how much the students grow," says Wendy Martin of Queens College. "Many say the course has been a turning point in their lives."

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OMEN'S TUDIES

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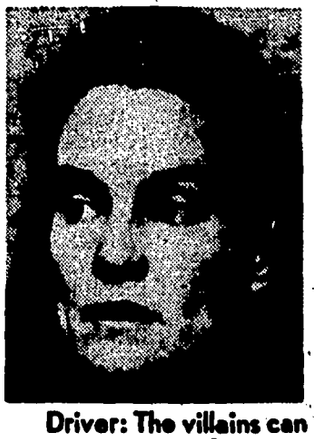

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"It certainly is," said Ann Petrie. "Probing, self-analysis can be just as difficult an intellectual activity as analyzing a book or doing a scientific experiment. You still have to understand concepts. You still must learn to express yourself, you still must communicate ideas clearly."

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Women's Studies deals with dynamite—very personal behavior, deep-set cultural norms. "In what other course," asks Barbara White of Northwestern University, "can you find, sandwiched between two abstract statements in a student's essay on marriage, 'You probably think I'm a nothing, Barbara, but in our Puerto Rican culture we're taught respect for the family'?"

Such an experience, she says, "makes one consider one's responsibility as a teacher more seriously than ever—and sometimes I've felt like leaving town." Obviously, this student had the impression there was one approved way to think about the family in this course, and she was "a nothing" when she couldn't understand or accept it.

But are there "correct" answers to the complex questions posed by Women's Studies? Must a student feel embarrassed if she or he has a dissenting opinion?

"I don't go to class anymore with one point of view to present," says CCNY's Miss Petrie. "I certainly don't know the whole truth about women. But together the class and I take what we read, put it together with our personal experience and try to figure things out. I count it a good class when we both learn something new. And, believe me, we're learning every day."

Tomorrow: Up From Under-Achievement.

Going up the up staircase at Barnard.

Post Photo by Arthur Pomerantz

ARTICLE V: Success & Femininity.

WOMEN'S STUDIES

NEWEST COURSE ON CAMPUS

By LINDSAY MILLER

WHEN HARVARD psychologist Matina Horner was named president of Radcliffe College earlier this month, there was general rejoicing in many Women's Studies classes. Not just because she's a woman, not just because she's 32 years old, but also because she's living proof that women don't have to be trapped in the syndrome she has described in her best-known psychological research.

Dr. Horner's pioneering work on underachievement in women—what she calls their "fear of success"—has become required reading in many Women's Studies courses. She explains her research this way:

"Consider Phil," she suggests in an article that has appeared in various anthologies, 'A bright young college sophomore, he's always done well in school. For as long as he can remember, he's wanted to be a doctor.

"We ask him to tell us a story based on one clue: *After first-term finals, John finds himself at the top of his medical school class.* Phil writes:

" 'John is a conscientious young man who worked hard. He is pleased with himself. John has always wanted to go into medicine and is very dedicated . . . John continues working hard and eventually graduates at the top of his class.'

"Now consider Monica," Dr. Horner continues. "Another honors student, she too has always done well and she too has visions of a flourishing career. We give her the same clue, but with *Anne* as the successful student: *After first-term finals, Anne finds herself at the top of her medical school class* . . . Instead of identifying with Anne's triumph, Monica tells a bizarre tale:

" 'Anne starts proclaiming her surprise and joy. Her fellow classmates are so disgusted with her behavior that they jump on her in a body and beat her. She is maimed for life.'

"Anne is a code name for a nonexistent person created by a group of med students. They take turns writing exams for Anne."

Dr. Horner reports that more than 65 per cent of the women students saw Anne's success as not much of a victory. Less than 10 per cent of the men saw John as worse off for having done well.

A bright woman, Dr. Horner concludes, is caught in a double bind. She's damned if she does succeed, and damned if she doesn't. Consequently, a woman capable of success fears that she might fail but she fears succeeding as well.

Why? Dr. Horner suggests that a woman —a white middle-class woman, at least—has been told all her life that she will "lose her femininity" if she does too well. Men—and women, too—won't like her if she's too smart.

What does all this have to do with Women's Studies? "Plenty," says Judy Stacey, who teaches a course on "Women and Schools" at Richmond College. "Women should know they can do better and aren't—just because they're hung up on losing whatever this so-called femininity is."

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Post Photo by Arthur Pomerantz

ARTICLE V: Success & Femininity.

WOMEN'S STUDIES

NEWEST COURSE ON CAMPUS

By LINDSAY MILLER

WHEN HARVARD psychologist Matina Horner was named president of Radcliffe College earlier this month, there was general rejoicing in many Women's Studies classes. Not just because she's a woman, not just because she's 32 years old, but also because she's living proof that women don't have to be trapped in the syndrome she has described in her best-known psychological research.

Dr. Horner's pioneering work on under-achievement in women—what she calls their "fear of success"—has become required reading in many Women's Studies courses. She explains her research this way:

"Consider Phil," she suggests in an article that has appeared in various anthologies, 'A bright young college sophomore, he's always done well in school. For as long as he can remember, he's wanted to be a doctor.

"We ask him to tell us a story based on one clue: *After first-term finals, John finds himself at the top of his medical school class.* Phil writes:

"'John is a conscientious young man who worked hard. He is pleased with himself. John has always wanted to go into medicine and is very dedicated . . . John continues working hard and eventually graduates at the top of his class.'

"Now consider Monica," Dr. Horner continues. "Another honors student, she too has always done well and she too has visions of a flourishing career. We give her the same clue, but with *Anne* as the successful student: ***After first-term finals, Anne finds herself at the top of her medical school class*** . . . Instead of identifying with Anne's triumph, Monica tells a bizarre tale:

"'Anne starts proclaiming her surprise and joy. Her fellow classmates are so disgusted with her behavior that they jump on her in a body and beat her. She is maimed for life.'

"Next we ask Monica and Phil to work on a series of achievement tests by themselves. Monica scores higher than Phil. Finally we get them together, competing against each other on the same kind of tests. Phil performs magnificently, but Monica dissolves into a bundle of nerves."

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Phil and Monica, it turns out, are not unique. Dr. Horner gave the "John/Anne" test to 178 undergraduates at the University of Michigan and found the same glaring differences in stories by men and women—and the same drop in performance when women were competing against men.

Consistently, women students said Anne was in trouble. She lost all her boyfriends, or she was so ugly she never had any. She might start wondering why she wanted to be a doctor in the first place. One woman even suggested: "Anne is a code name for a nonexistent person created by a group of med students. They take turns writing exams for Anne."

Dr. Horner reports that more than 65 per cent of the women students saw Anne's success as not much of a victory. Less than 10 per cent of the men saw John as worse off for having done well.

A bright woman, Dr. Horner concludes, is caught in a double bind. She's damned if she does succeed, and damned if she doesn't. Consequently, a woman capable of success fears that she might fail but she fears succeeding as well.

Why? Dr. Horner suggests that a woman —a white middle-class woman, at least—has been told all her life that she will "lose her femininity" if she does too well. Men—and women, too—won't like her if she's too smart.

What does all this have to do with Women's Studies? "Plenty," says Judy Stacey, who teaches a course on "Women and Schools" at Richmond College. "Women should know they can do better and aren't—just because they're hung up on losing whatever this so-called femininity is."

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"To the feminist teacher, these differences are the result of conditioning and not biology," says Elaine Showalter of Douglass College. "But the differences exist nonetheless, and it's one of the jobs of Women's Studies to help overcome them. But even when students have sympathetic teachers and women's classes, they still must struggle with feelings of inadequacy and timidity."

She quotes end-of-the-year comments from some of her students: 'I began this course with little confidence and I am leaving with an equal amount, neither more nor less."

Or, another student wrote, "I do not like to talk in class. I guess I still fear saying the wrong thing." One student was a little more confident when it came to self-grading: "I think I deserve an A in this course," she wrote, "because before I took it I never had the guts to ask for one."

But why are these women so shy? Is it simply because they're women? Aren't shy too? Critics of Dr. Horner's thesis she puts too much emphasis on sex di ences, and not enough on the other fa which can influence achievement.

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The next day the innovative teacher gave the papers back. The freshmen got a plus mark if they expressed any pride or pleasure in writing. Minus if they said it brought pain and failure.

One year 14 out of 15 students got minuses. Typical comments were: "When I have to write anything I get a headache for the whole day before." Or, "My English teacher last year said I couldn't think logically." Or, "I'm afraid I don't have any imagination."

For the rest of the year, she asked students to spend the first 10 minutes of class writing in a journal they would not have to show her. "Students who could only write 20 words that first day were writing pages by the end of the term. And quality in their other work came with fluency," she said. "There's a definite correlation between students who like to write and those who can."

But the freshmen still had the tendency, she notes, to avoid taking stands on issues, preferring to remain neutral. "They were also passive and dependent when it came to assignments," she says. "They'd always ask me to spell out exactly what I wanted.

"I refused, of course. I also refused to give grades," she says. "Once the students realized they didn't have to please anyone but themselves, their creativity began to flow."

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All this sounds so familiar to me. I was an English major, but I never wrote idea papers. I always wrote analysis. I'd take a small poem or act of a play and analyze it very carefully. I learned to do that rather well, but I never trusted myself to go out on a limb and express an opinion. And, in retrospect, none of my professors ever pressed me to.

I graduated from college (a women's college, in fact) just on the eve of Women's Liberation. I realize now I had always been interested in what it means to be a woman. I wrote papers on topics like "The Women in 'Hamlet'" or "Yeats' Crazy Jane Poems." I was trying to understand women—but, I realize now, as seen through the eyes of men.

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Reading for the course included Doris Lessing, Mary McCarthy, Kate Chopin and Simone de Beauvoir. "Every year," she says, "someone would ask, 'Why do we have just lady writers? They're always inferior to men.'

"I realized that if women think women writers are inferior to men, no wonder they doubt their own abilities. So on the first day of class, I asked them to write a short paper on whether they thought they wrote well. I also asked if they enjoyed writing."

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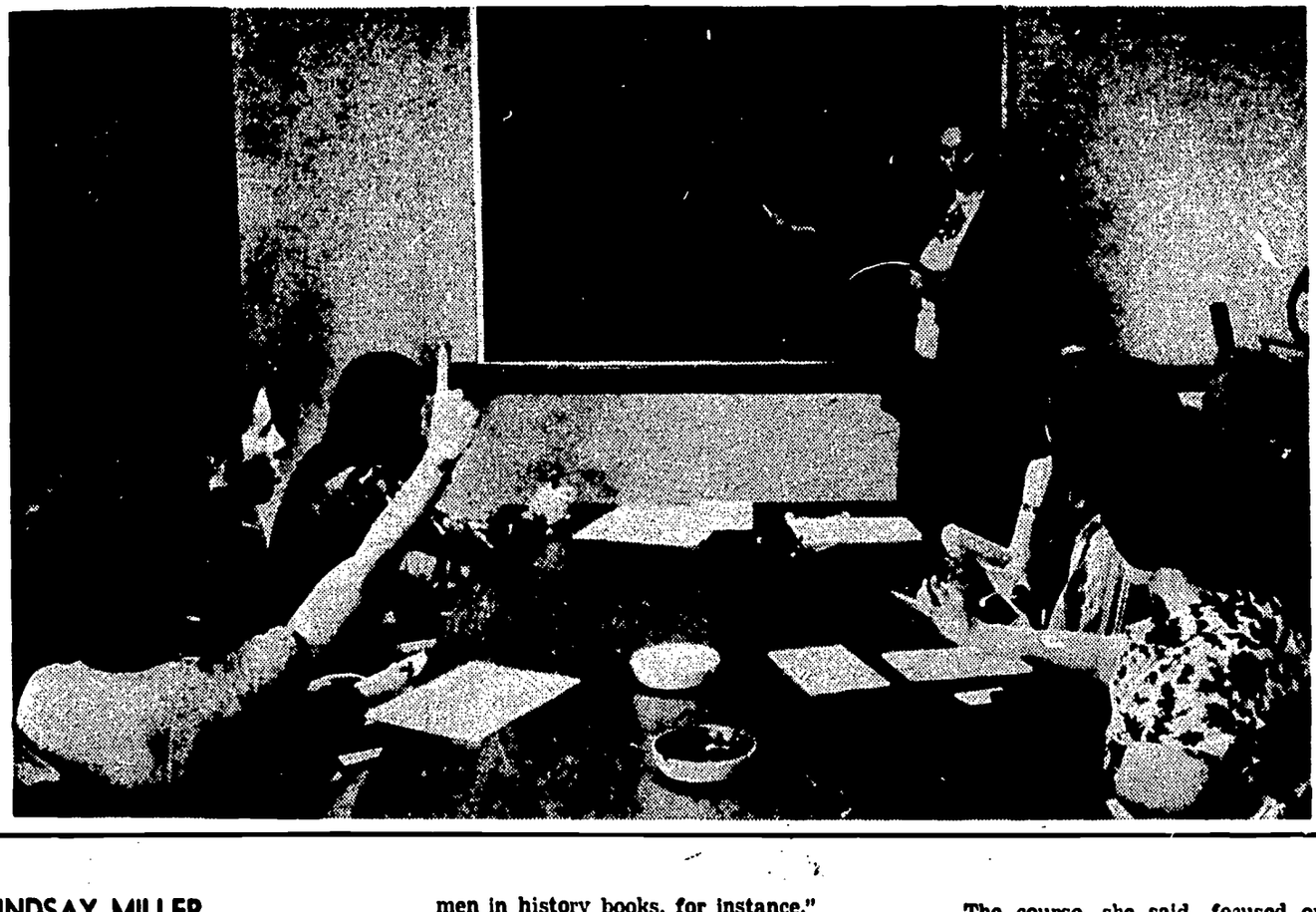
I've told a number of my women friends about Women's Studies, and we've all had the same reaction: Wouldn't it be great to take all our courses again—with eyes open? I remember signing up for Child Psychology, for instance, vaguely thinking and joking out loud that it would make me a good wife-and-mother. I have no idea what we learned about the sexes, but I'd love to go back now and take a look.

The thing that has struck me most about the Women's Studies classes I've visited is the way students and teachers talk to each other. In a word, they're communicating. So many of my classes were just the opposite, merely academic games-playing. Students wouldn't listen to each other because they were too busy thinking of the next little intellectual gem they'd let fall. Or they'd just clam up.

Women in Women's Studies, and maybe women students in general, seem to like each other more than they did, say, five years ago. One of the biggest gifts of the Women's Liberation Movement has been: Women can be friends. We are all sisters.

Continued in the Weekend Magazine.

WOMEN'S STUDIES NEWEST COURSE ON CAMPUS



By LINDSAY MILLER

ARTICLE VI: What's Next?

"OBESE STUDIES—that's what they'll be asking for next," the portly professor at Hunter College rose to say at two separate curriculum committee meetings recently.

The women who'd been pushing for a Women's Studies program at Hunter all year didn't think he was very funny. "Some people seem to think that if you don't take Women's Studies seriously, it will just go away," said Sarah Pomeroy, a classics professor, after one particularly frustrating meeting.

"Women's Studies is not a joke," she said. "Five hundred colleges have recognized that. I hope Hunter, which after all was founded *for* women, will too."

The resistance to Women's Studies, which in this case has come from both men and women, is strong. However, the pressure to establish these courses seems to be even stronger.

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The growth of Women's Studies courses over the last few years has been "nothing short of phenomenal," according to Sheila Tobias, who taught one of the earliest multi-disciplinary courses on women at Cornell in 1970.

"We thought we were the first," she said, "until we discovered women all over the country had the same idea." With the help of KNOW Inc.—a group of women in Pittsburgh who run their own storefront press—she published a catalog called "Female Studies." "At first we included course descriptions and booklists. But now there are so many all we can do is list the names of the courses and the colleges."

But the most significant development, she says, is the growth of Women's Studies beyond college walls. Starting at kindergarten, men in history books, for instance."

Here again, students, teachers and even some parents are pushing for change. There were Women's Studies this year at a number of city high schools, from Adlai Stevenson HS in the Bronx to Susan B. Wagner HS in Staten Island.

Colleges are also starting to offer women's courses in their adult education programs. One group of housewives who took a course on feminism at Queens College were so excited by what they learned, they went out and recruited 30 more women for the next semester's class.

Some women get recruited unwittingly. "I'd never have come to this course if I thought it was Women's Lib," said one woman in "Making It in a Man's World" at the New School for Social Research. "I came for some practical help."

This course is part of a trend in self-help courses for women. "There have been get-ahead courses for women for years, but the emphasis has often been: use your feminine wiles and you can get what you want," said teacher Charlotte Klein, who's made it on her own to senior vice-president of a public relations firm. "This course talks about women's rights. I'm trying to build self-confidence. The support of other women is very important when you're going through this struggle."

The "Making It" class this term included both professional women and secretaries, from their 20s to their 50s. "The one thing they had in common when we started," said the teacher, "was a defeatist attitude. They felt no matter what they did on their jobs, they couldn't succeed."

At one recent session, however, a woman stockbroker stood up and said, "I just want to tell you I spoke up this week. I asked for something I should have had years ago." She wouldn't say what that was, but, she said, "I got it." The class broke into applause.

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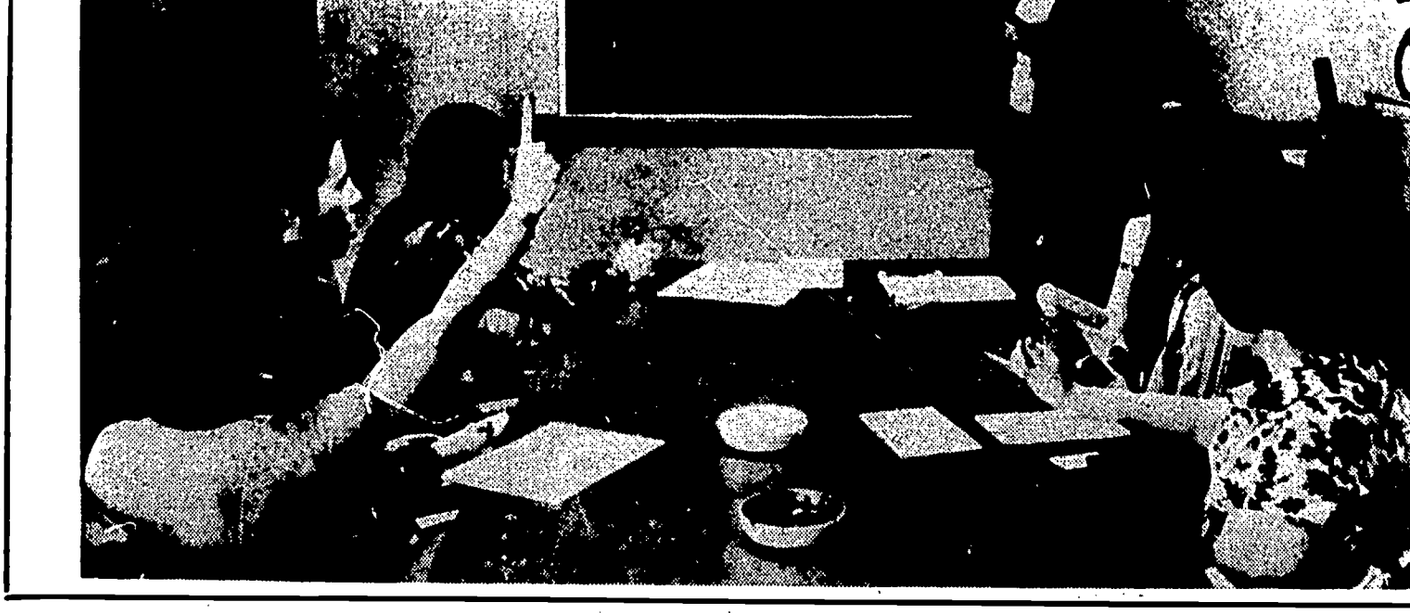

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But the most significant development, she says, is the growth of Women's Studies beyond college walls. Starting at kindergarten, even on the day-care level, some teachers are now making conscious attempts to avoid what she describes as sex-stereotyping.

"But the majority of teachers still make important distinctions between boys and girls," says Judy Stacey, who teaches elementary school teachers in her graduate-level class on "Women and Schools" at Richmond College. "Sometimes they act unconsciously: 'Alright, boys, I want you to rearrange the chairs while the girls clean up.'

"By high school," she adds, "these sex distinctions are both more blatant (boys-only shop, emphasis on men's sports) and more subtle—the silent treatment given women in history books, for instance."

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Despite its speedy growth, however, Women's Studies still is subject, as is the women's movement as a whole, to the notion that it is a middle-class movement, of interest only to privileged white women.

"Many of my students felt that way," said Dierdre English, who co-taught a course on "Women and the Health and Mental Health Systems" at SUNY at Old Westbury this year. "Most of them are young black nursing students. They came in very hostile to Women's Lib because they said it put men down."

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Women's Studies is still, if the be pardoned, "virgin territory." No knows the full scope of the subje actly how to teach it.

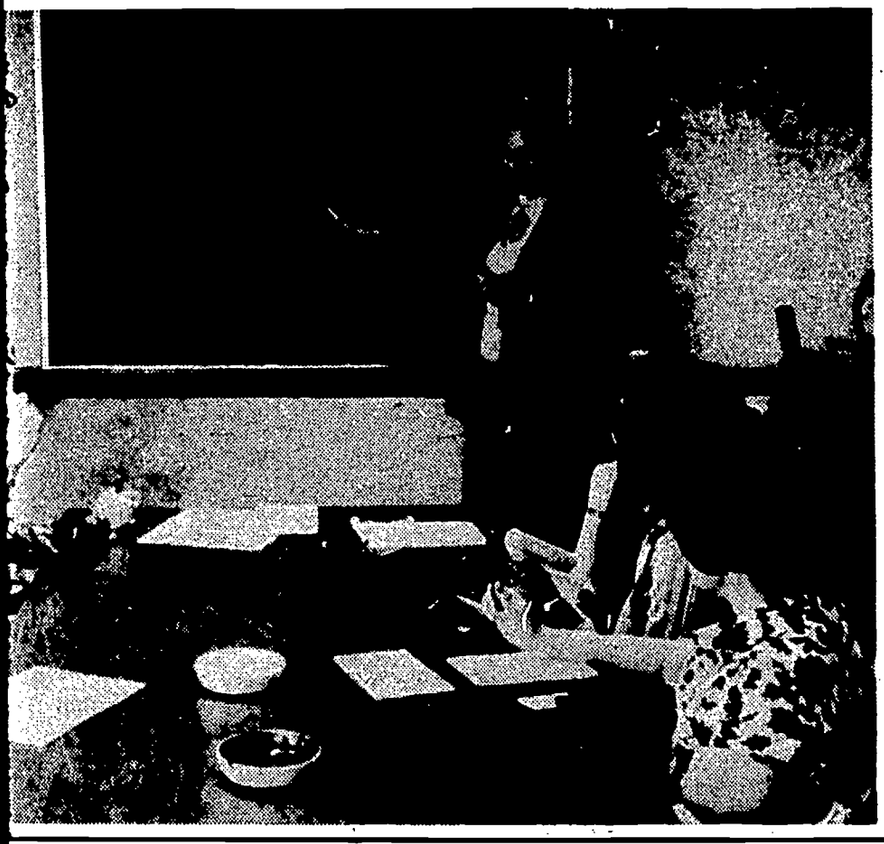
At present, the one thing comm participants in Women's Studies i ing of excitement. "For once, you're about you," said a junior at Sarah L "The work is exciting personally, int ly. There's so much work to be do ing one of these papers is not like other paper on the Civil War. You g do original research. You 'make yourself."

'S STUDIES NEWEST COURSE ON CAMPUS

For more information on women's studies:

—KNOW Inc., Box 86031, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221, publishes essays about Women's Studies as well as lists of courses and course descriptions.

—"Women's Studies, An Interdisciplinary Journal," c/o Wendy Martin, 39 Jane St., N. Y. 10011, is planned as a scholarly journal edited by a group of prominent Women's Studies professors. It will be published twice a year, starting this summer.



Charlotte Klein outlines the course for 'Making It in a Man's World,' part of the Women's Studies program at the New School for Social Research.

Post Photo by Frank Leonardo

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Here again, students, teachers and even ome parents are pushing for change. There ere Women's Studies this year at a numer of city high schools, from Adlai Stevenon HS in the Bronx to Susan B. Wagner HS n Staten Island.

Colleges are also starting to offer wonen's courses in their adult education proams. One group of housewives who took course on feminism at Queens College ere so excited by what they learned, they ent out and recruited 30 more women for he next semester's class.

Some women get recruited unwittingly. I'd never have come to this course if I hought it was Women's Lib," said one woman in "Making It in a Man's World" at the New School for Social Research. "I came for ome practical help."

This course is part of a trend in self-help ourses for women. "There have been gethead courses for women for years, but the mphasis has often been: use your feminine iles and you can get what you want," said eacher Charlotte Klein, who's made it on er own to senior vice-president of a pubc relations firm. "This course talks about s rights. I'm trying to build self- ice. The support of other women is ry important when you're going through his struggle."

The course, she said, focused on "how, historically, women have been put down because of their bodies. We talked about views of childbirth, sex and menstruation in several cultures; the possibility that the medieval witches were really gynecologists; and how hysteria, the common malady of Victorian ladies, may have been a reaction to their cooped-up role in life.

"Finally, we looked at the current health system where these women work, where most of the doctors and administrators are men, and where three-quarters of the health consumers are women.

"When these students came in, they were feeling ripped off by the health system. In this course, they put that feeling together with their feelings about being women," she explained.

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"They still can't stand the media image of Women's Lib," she added. "But they've developed a real pro-woman spirit. They see themselves as having a pro-woman function in the health system. In other words, these working-class black women have joined the larger women's movement."

But, insists anthropologist Constance Sutton, "you've got to be careful not to general-

"Students used to complain about their work being irrelevant," says Gerda Lerner, who teaches Women's Studies at Sarah Lawrence. "Now it doesn't have to be. I had one student who interviewed her grandmother for a paper on a woman's experience of immigration from Europe. She said she felt close to her for the first time."

Graduate students, too, are being affected by Women's Studies, says Sheila Tobias, who is now head of Women's Studies at Wesleyan University: "Why write a Ph.D. thesis on some third-rate obscure male poet when there are so many good women crying to be done? I know one woman who fought like hell to change her thesis from 'Diplomacy in 14th Century Venice' to 'Anti-Feminism in 19th Century America.' Sarah Lawrence," she added, "has just announced a master's program in women's history where such topics will be welcome."

Should Women's Studies be a major on the undergraduate level? The vote here is split, although many people agree with Miss Tobias that "Women's Studies should never cut itself off from the bulk of the college. If only committed feminists are attracted to Women's Studies, then you'll just be preaching to the converted."

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"Making It" class this term included professional women and secretaries, heir 20s to their 50s. "The one thing ad in common when we started," said acher, "was a defeatist attitude. They matter what they did on their jobs, ouldn't succeed."

one recent session, however, a woman oker stood up and said, "I just want you I spoke up this week. I asked mething I should have had years ago." ouldn't say what that was, but, she got it." The class broke into applause.

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pite its speedy growth, however, Wo- Studies still is subject, as is the wo- movement as a whole, to the notion is a middle-class movement, of in- only to privileged white women.

ny of my students felt that way," erdre English, who co-taught a course omen and the Health and Mental Systems" at SUNY at Old Westbury ar. "Most of them are young black students. They came in very hostile men's Lib because they said it put own."

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But, insists anthropologist Constance Sutton, "you've got to be careful not to generalize when you talk about the women's movement. Women in different cultures have much in common, but they're not the same." She and fellow NYU professor June Nash designed a course on "Women of the Third World" to illustrate just that point.

"Women's Liberation often focuses on the white women and generalizes from there," Prof. Sutton says. "But in the Third World, the total group—and not just women—is oppressed. And that makes a difference in the way Third World women see liberation —and the way we should see Women's Studies."

Women's Studies is still, if the pun will be pardoned, "virgin territory." No one yet knows the full scope of the subject or exactly how to teach it.

At present, the one thing common to all participants in Women's Studies is a feeling of excitement. "For once, you're studying about you," said a junior at Sarah Lawrence. "The work is exciting personally, intellectually. There's so much work to be done. Writing one of these papers is not like doing another paper on the Civil War. You go out and do original research. You 'make history' yourself."

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Instead of a major, she suggests, "I'd like to see Women's Studies a required course for all students. It would be compensation for all the things that have been left out of their education so far.

"I'd also require a graduate-level course in sex-role socialization—what sex roles are and how they got to be that way—for all graduate students in law, psychology, social work and medicine. For anybody preing to deal with people, this knowledge is essential."

But is Women's Studies really here to stay? Or is it merely an intellectual fad? "In the 1930s everyone thought labor history was a widely unorthodox topic for study," says Barbara Bellows Watson, newly appointed head of the Women's Studies program at City College. "Now labor history is an accepted part of the college curriculum. I think that's what will happen with Women's Studies."

Some people, however feel the goal of Women's Studies is to self-destruct. Someday, they say, there won't be a need to combat sexism because there won't be any left. But that day, they admit, is a long way off.

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